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ABSTRACT

Universities, local school districts, intermediate schools, and state education departments can work together to create model collaboratives by redirecting existing resources, consolidating resources, and discovering mutually beneficial resources to improve teacher preparation, inservice education, and the quality of classroom instruction. Under the leadership of the School of Human and Educational Services at Oakland University, representatives of the public schools, the campuses of two community colleges, and the intermediate school district have joined forces to improve the quality of education in the county. The focus for collaboration is on student writing skills. The first program implemented will be the publication of a directory of services, people, and resources available for writing instruction. The second program involves colloquia, workshops, and other activities using local, regional, and national scholars in the field of writing skills. The programs will be held at strategic sites around the county and will be cooperatively funded. A center has been initiated for seeking alternative educational practices and programs through research and evaluation, the preparation of support materials, and program and staff development. The Meadow Brook Leadership Academy, using the resources from all collaborative units, will provide continuing education and professional development opportunities for school administrators. The advantages, characteristics, and possible problems of collaboration among educational institutions are discussed. (JD)

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COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

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COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

Education is in great ferment. The crisis in education described in the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education has created a new climate of discussion about our schools, teachers, and teacher education programs. We are engaged in a great national debate about the quality and effectiveness of education. Numerous studies have been published and more are on the way prescribing solutions for problems in education. Education is "in" at the national and state levels.

In Michigan, the State Superintendent of Instruction, Philip Runkel, has called for local coalitions of business people, educators, and community people to examine how the national critiques fit. Governor James Blanchard has appointed a Comission on Higher Education to examine how resources in higher education can be used in a cost effective manner to serve the educational needs of the State. The State Board received the recommendations of an extensive study of Michigan high schools and recently issued an action plan for educational reform. Legislative initiatives and proposals for educational reform are proliferating. Similar activities are occuring in almost every state across the country.

What actions can we in teacher education take to improve the quality, integrity, and efficiency of education? How shall we approach the questions of quality in curriculum, teaching, and teacher preparation? How can we improve our educational institutions? How can we best use our educational resources to enhance the quality of education?

Alvin Toffler has observed that the survival of organizations, institutions, and society will depend upon the ability of autonomous units and entities to collaborate in achieving common goals and objectives. In a changing, complicated and challenging society, the interrelationships among once separate and independent subgroups grow as organizations find themselves ecologically bound to each other. It is clear that autonomous organizations cannot continue to operate independently and indeed there is growing recognition that through collaborative efforts organizations can learn to improve their effectiveness. It is evident that collaborative efforts are essential to improve the quality of education.

Collaboration in Education: Common Concerns

Central to the improvement of education is the organizing principle that public schools, universities, intermediate school districts and the State Department of Education are interrelated and interacting parts of a single education system. We are bound in a common enterprise — the development of human talent. The development and productivity of our environment and our communities will largely be determined in the short and long term by human talents and abilities — especially those of our children and youth whose intellectual capacities and skills will be critical to the future of our nation.

Teacher preparation and professional development are key elements in improving the quality of education and offer a common ground for collaboration. The basis for collaboration is found in several major questions that have confronted educators for many years:

1) How can pre-service and in-service teacher education be successfully linked?

2) How can curriculum development and staff development be effectively integrated?

3) How can generally diverse educational constituencies (students, teachers, administrators, supervisors, college and university staff, interested community) best share experiences and resources?

4) How can teachers, principals, and other school personnel be continually renewed in their ability and vigor? How can university faculty be continually renewed in their ability and vigor?

5. How can school districts confront the increasing pressures to be more accountable, to generate more community involvement and participation in educational programming and decision making, and to confront the complex educational issues brought on by a rapidly growing information society?

6. How can universities, faced with problems of program redundancies and pressures for being more accountable begin to use their finite resources in the most effective way to address the professional development needs of educational personnel, the challenges of school improvement, and the concerns for educational excellence and equity?

These significant questions make compelling the need for cooperative and collaborative efforts among educational institutions. Out of such need is borne the hope of educational collaboratives. Universities, local school districts, intermediate schools, and the state departments can work together to create model collaboratives by redirecting existing resources, consolidating resources and discovering mutually beneficial resources to improve teacher preparation, in-service education and the quality of classroom instruction. Educational collaboratives are organizations in which university faculty, classroom teachers, intermediate and local school districts, and student interns share expertise, time, and resources to jointly plan programs of pre-service and in-service teacher education, action research, curriculum development, and school improvement. They provide opportunities for

participating personnel (in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, paraprofessionals,, administrators, and university faculty) to share ideas and materials, to use a wide range of educational resources, and to receive training specifically geared to their most pressing teaching job embedded and site-specific problems.

A CASE STUDY OF COLLABORATION: COLLABORATIVES FOR QUALITY, EQUITY, AND LEADERSHIP

The following case study documents collaborative efforts involving at one time or another a university, community college, two intermediate school districts, and a number of local school districts in addressing the issues of quality, equity, integrity, and efficiency in education. Through the formation of several educational collaboratives the various educational constituencies have learned a great deal about the characteristics of successful institutional collaboration. All of the collaboratives involve Oakland University which is a state supported institution of higher education located in the Detroit Metropolitan area about thirty-five minutes from downtown Detroit. The University has approximately 11,000 full time students drawn primarily from Oakland and Macomb Counties which has a combined population of nearly 2,000,000 people. The University offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs in education, human services, health sciences, arts and sciences, engineering, management, nursing, and continuing education. The specific unit which has provided leadership to the University in the development of educational collaboratives is the School of Human and Educational Services.

For the School of Human and Educational Services the past few years have been a period of downsizing and consolidation, but with collaborative growth. With the current explosion of knowledge, significant societal changes, and the growing demand for quality the challenge for the school is embodied in the diverse concerns of its constituencies, shifting enrollment patterns, and the rapidly expanding range of educational settings and needs. To respond to this challenge the school has been involved in a process of reorganization and program development. The faculty have embarked on a program to improve the efficiency of resource allocations, to strengthen the quality of current programs, and to launch carefully selected initiatives which address important emerging educational needs in school improvement. Within this context of change and challenge several educational collaboratives have been established to reflect qualitative advancement on the issues of excellence and equity.

The Oakland Educational Collaborative

Oakland County, which has a population of over one million people, encompasses a variety of local school districts — large and small; urban, suburban, and rural; affluent and poor. Representatives of the public schools of Oakland County, the campuses of Oakland Community College and Oakland University, and the Oakland Intermediate School District joined forces to form the Oakland Educational Collaborative for the purpose of improving the quality of education in Oakland County. Members of the steering committee, who guide and direct the Collaborative, were appointed by the chief executive officers of Oakland County's educational institutions to explore how institutional resources could be used in complementary and mutually supportive ways to

improve the quality of teaching and learning in the university, community college, and public schools of the county.

Representatives to the Collaborative Steering Committee were charged with the task of developing tangible and collaborative programs to address the educational problems they mutually share. The steering committee identified the area of language arts as its initial focus for collaboration, with chief emphasis on enhancing student writing skills K-16.

Beginning with 1984-85 school year, two program directions will be implemented. One will be the publication of a directory of services, people and resources in Oakland County's educational institutions available in the teaching of writing. The directory will be both paper-based as well as computer stored for ready update.

The second program strand involves colloquia, workshops, and other activities utilizing local, regional and national scholars expert in the field of writing skills. The programs will be held at strategic sites around the county, cooperatively funded, will be well publicized and open to the educational community-at-large. The specific content of each meeting is being determined by faculty and teachers of writing from the respective institutions who have met several times to share information about current needs and efforts to achieve greater effectiveness in the teaching of writing. The faculty representatives have identified areas of cooperation in curriculum and staff development and are working on a long range plan to include goals, objectives, and a calendar of activities for planning and implementing conferences, workshops, and seminars.

Other planning groups will be formed to plan cooperative programs for different curricular areas. These efforts represent the beginning of a

long-term collaborative effort to enhance the quality of K-16 education in Oakland County.

The Center for the Study of Alternatives in Education

Our society's future is seeded by the talents and skills of our children and youth. As a society, we seek through our educational institutions to nurture and develop these capacities in ways that unfold benefits for each individual and for the common good. Yet, we find that many of our children and youth avoid educational opportunities, express negative reactions to learning tasks, fail to experience basic developmental sequences and demands, and, feel neglected by school programs. While we speak of a Nation at Risk it must be recognized that there are many children and youth "educationally at risk" and in need of alternative programs and practices.

In recognition and response to these conditions the Macomb Intermediate School District and Oakland University have jointly initiated a "Center for the Study of Alternatives in Education". The Center is dedicated to seeking ways and means by which children and youth can be more adequately educated through altnerative practices and programs. Cooperative work with local school districts and other educational agencies during the past two years, provided the basis for formation of a center that could combine the complementary resources and expertise of the University and the Macomb Intermediate School District and their collaboration with others.

The Center's principal kinds of activities are:

- Research and evaluation focusing on investigating alternative programs being implemented, assessing the accumulated experience of previous relevant innovations, examining alternative programs

operating elsewhere, and accumulating knowledge about the developmental qualities of student learning and social adjustment.

- Preparation of support materials and resources focusing on the needs of staff and students. As a starting point, documentation of programs in progress is being undertaken as a basis for developing instructional guidebooks, student guidebooks, audio-visual aids and reference materials.

- Program development and implementation focusing on the scope, sequence and organization of alternative instruction. These activities are being designed and implemented to strengthen and build new capacities for instructional problem solving for nurturing student maturation, and for the adaptation of program designs to local needs and circumstances.

- Professional and para-professionals staff development focusing on knowledge and skills needed for the implementation and continued improvement of alternative programs, and for mediating student development. Emphasis is being placed on staff skills needed for teamwork, understanding the character and challenges of students' progressive socialization and cultural assimilation, documentation of teaching and learning, and staff-based and student-based concerns as a strategy for adopting program designs and sequences.

The administration of the Center is located at the Macomb Intermediate School District. The involvement of the University is coordinated by the School of Human and Educational Services. The Program and Steering Committee of the Center is formed from the senior staff and faculty of the major programs of the Center. It is responsible for setting program priorities and reports annually to the Superintendent of the Macomb Intermediate School District and the Dean of the School of Human and Educational Services.

The Meadow Brook Leadership Academy

The Meadow Brook Leadership Academy is an educational collaborative combining the resources of Oakland University, Oakland Intermediate School District, Macomb Intermediate School District, and the professional associations of principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors of

Oakland and Macomb counties. The purpose of the Academy is to provide continuing education and professional development opportunities for school administrators in areas of need identified by administrators.

Planning for the formation of the Academy was done by representatives from Oakland University and the intermediate schools, and the presidents of the various associations for school administrators. The planning meetings of the Academy were held at Meadow Brook Hall on the campus of Oakland University — thus the name Meadow Brook Leadership Academy. Faculty for the Academy are being drawn from school administrators, regional and national consultants, university faculty from a variety of disciplines, and other school personnel. Instruction will be offered for academic credit, non credit, and CEU's in a variety of formats including one day seminars, weekend workshops, week long institutes, short term courses, and conventional course structures.

For 1984-85 the focus of the Academy will be on the school principal. A group of twelve principals meeting with university and intermediate school district representatives have planned a year long program of workshops and seminars. The program is guided and directed by the principals' planning group under the aegis of the Academy. In other activities the Academy is currently building a resource bank of instructors and conducting needs assessments among superintendents and associate superintendents for instruction, and curriculum consultants and supervisors.

Establishing A Board of Visitors

Reflecting the commitment to sustained and long term collaborative relationships with schools, educational agencies, and business and industry a Board of Visitors has been established for the School of Human and Educational Services.

The Board assists the school in its development as an intellectual and knowledge base for improving education and human services. The fourteen members of the Board were appointed by the President of Oakland University, Joseph E. Champagne, who received nominations from the faculty and the dean of the school. Faculty submitted nominations to the dean. Nominations were reviewed by the school's steering committee and then recommendations were made by the dean to the president.

Members of the Board include school superintendents, classroom teachers, representatives of the State Department of Education, directors of training in business and industry, and school board members.

The role of the Board of Visitors is to give advice and counsel to the dean and faculty of the School of Human and Educational Services. The Board assists the School of Human and Educational Services in providing programs responsive to the learning and training needs of public schools and human service agencies as they cope with a changing society in a complex technological and diverse culture.

Specifically, the Board:

1. provides its perspectives and insights concerning the significant issues and national, regional, and local trends which affect the school's curriculum and employment opportunities for future graduates in education and human services.

2. reviews curriculum and program plans and proposals in light of anticipated needs and trends in education and human services.

3. provides channels of communication and data to help the school assess the effectiveness of its program.

4. provides guidance regarding the school's program of research and development.

5. assists the school in its design and implementation of staff development, continuing education, and public service programs.

Advantages of Collaboration

Based on these collaborative efforts we have found there are obvious advantages to collaboration:

- Collaboration achieves the interaction of two aims - the advancement of knowledge and the improvement of practice.

- Collaboration insures that the interests, questions, and problems of professional practice are reflected in the programs and research of the university along with the data drawn from the theoretical and empirical literature.

- Collaboration provides reciprocal and collegial working relationships between university faculty and public school educators and a common shared experience for reflection, learning, and growth.

- Collaboration reduces redundancies and overlapping of resources and finances by developing mechanisms for sharing resources and fiancial support.

- Collaboration encourages the integration of research and service, the integration of preservice and inservice education, and a generative cycle of knowledge - action - reflection - knowledge - action - reflection.

- Collaboration creates a new ecology for stimulating professional growth and staff development for both university faculty and public school educators.

Characteristics of Effective Collaboration

Reflecting on the development and implementation of educational collaboratives we believe that effective institutional collaboration is characterized by the following elements:

- Collaboration is understood and accepted as a sustained dialogical process - there is discussion and inquiry about the purposes of collaboration - problems are mutually defined. Action proceeds from collaborative inquiry and agreement.
- Participants work together over a period of time in seeking solutions to the problems defined.
- Participants work with parity and assume equal responsibility to identify and inquire into, and address the problems of the schools and the classroom.
- The unique skills and insights provided by the participants are well used without assigning any particular set of capabilities to a superior status - there is a work <u>with</u> rather than a work <u>on</u> posture.
- All parties to the collaborative effort know what each party expects to give and expects to get from the other collaboraters.
- Collaboration is enacted for a specific purpose and not just for the sake of collaboration. An effective collaborative does not bite off more than it can chew. Its efforts are clearly focused, manageable, and within the limits of the collaborative's resources.
- There is unequivocal support for collaboration from the chief executive officer of each institution.

Problems to be Faced Together in Building Educational Collaboratives

Educational collaboratives cannot be built over-night. There are many problems involved in the development of authentic partnerships between higher education and public schools.

One problem is that of mutual respect. University people are often seen by others as impractical, ivory tower dwellers. Professors, on the other hand, often see others as fine workers in the field who have no theoretical grasp of what they are doing. Teachers association representatives are often viewed as narrowly interested in only the monetary aspects of teacher welfare. Administrators and professors are often seen as paternalistic status seekers who don't know what it is like in the classroom. Overcoming preconceptions and sterotypes and building a basis for effective cooperation take time and patience. Each representative of each constituency has to be given time to express his/her personal and institutional points of view and to absorb the views of others.

Based on our accumulated experience with educational collaboratives, we know that quality educational collaboration calls for an investment of time in establishing the most efficient and equitable operating, decision making, and problem solving procedures. It calls for clarification regarding who speaks for whom and with what authority can commit resources, support, and cooperation. It calls for patience, staying power, and hard work in communicating with constituents and working toward constituents ownership of objectives and products. It calls for realism in understanding the complexities and demands of such an undertaking, and the time and effort necessary to attain objectives. And, finally, it calls for faith and attitudinal and moral commitment to the idea that through collaboration there is collective power, there are collective competencies, and a broad base of knowledge and experience to address far more effectively the major issues confronting education today.

Educational institutions cannot afford to operate in isolation from each other. By pooling and redirecting resources, and making them complementary, we can better serve ourselves, and most importantly, the children, adolescents and adults in our schools. Through carefully planned collaboration between higher education and public schools, public schools can become centers of vibrant learning for children, teachers, and university faculty; and public schools, colleges and the universities can be developed to the point where each is considered an extension of the other in regard to teacher education and the improvement of education. Educational collaboratives would demonstrate that we can, through partnerships, complement resources and integrate theory with practice, and research with action, in responding to the complex and demanding challenge of improving the quality of education.